



NEWS



News Headlines 9/25-27/2018

- Cajon Pass fire contained
- 50-acre blaze in Cajon Pass shuts down 15 Freeway for hours
- Brush fire closes I-15 in Southern California
- 15 Freeway Reopens After 50-Acre Brush Fire in Cajon Pass Prompts Closure
- Evacuation advisory lifted after Cajon Pass brush fire shuts down 15 Freeway for hours
- CAJON PASS FIRE: BLAZE CLOSES SOUTHBOUND I-15 FREEWAY IN CALIFORNIA
- Cajon Pass brush fire prompts partial I-15 closure
- Firefighters and bystanders lift off-road vehicle to free man in Hesperia
- CAR CRASH LEADS TO FIRE IN JOSHUA TREE SUNDAY

Opinions

- Victorville Daily Press: Letters to the Editor
- Hi-Desert Star: Letters to the Editor

Cajon Pass fire contained

Paola Baker, Victorville Daily Press

Posted Sep 26, 2018 at 11:38 AM, Updated at 8:27 AM



An air tanker drops fire retardant on the Keenbrook Fire in Devore on Wednesday. About 250 San Bernardino County Fire Department personnel battled the blaze near Kenwood Avenue and Cajon Boulevard. [James Quigg, Daily Press]

CAJON PASS — Fire crews expected to continue mopping up overnight a stubborn wildfire that shut down Interstate 15 for several hours when it first broke out Wednesday morning.

Dubbed the Keenbrook Fire, the blaze burned through 50 acres and was at 50 percent containment as of 8 p.m., just a little over six hours after flames first began to spread off southbound I-15 and Kenwood Avenue in Devore.

“We’re making progress,” San Bernardino National Forest Service spokesman Zach Behrens said Wednesday evening. “There’s heavy mop-up going on and we’re continuing to monitor hot spots as flare-ups are still occurring.”

The fire began shortly before 11 a.m., quickly spread and created a giant plume of smoke visible in the High Desert and throughout Southern California. It grew from 20 to 50 acres in less than an hour before fire personnel from various local agencies started making inroads.

Officials were quick to shut down I-15 right at the start of the blaze, Caltrans spokeswoman Terri Kasinga said, and also shut down northbound Interstate 215 at Kendall in San Bernardino. Apart from a brief period just after noon where one northbound I-15 lane was reopened, the freeway closures lasted until about 3 p.m.

“Fire crews were concerned that the fire might jump to the northbound side (of I-15),” Kasinga said. “So all lanes were promptly shut down again.”

Firefighters were aided by calm winds and the relentless efforts of air tankers, which poured water and fire retardant on the blaze.

“Crews and aircraft got on scene really quickly and that helped slow the rate of spread,” National Forest Service spokesman Mike Dunn said at the scene. “We’ve been able to keep it contained in this little pocket between Cajon Boulevard and Kenwood Avenue.”

Early on, firefighters issued advisory evacuation notices to Mathews Ranch and people in structures north of the fire. It is unknown if any residents actually evacuated, but Dunn said the advisory was lifted just after 1 p.m.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20180926/cajon-pass-fire-contained>

50-acre blaze in Cajon Pass shuts down 15 Freeway for hours

By BEATRIZ E. VALENZUELA | bvalenzuela@scng.com, MEGAN BARNES | mbarnes@scng.com and BRIAN ROKOS | brokos@scng.com | San Bernardino Sun

PUBLISHED: September 26, 2018 at 11:50 am | UPDATED: September 26, 2018 at 8:18 pm



A plane makes a fire retardant drop as a hand crew work below fighting the Keenbrook Fire in the Cajon Pass on Wednesday, September 26, 2018. (Photo by Stan Lim, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

A 50-acre brush fire in the Cajon Pass shut down the 15 Freeway for almost four hours Wednesday, Sept. 26, creating a traffic nightmare for motorists on the highway as well as those who tried to find a way around the closure.

The fire, on the west side of the freeway, was 50 percent contained Wednesday night, the U.S. Forest Service said. The cause was under investigation.

Traffic remained slow well into the evening between Highway 138 and the 15/215 split after the closure created a long backup to the north and the south.

Dubbed the Keenbrook fire, the blaze was reported just before 11 a.m. along the freeway north of Kenwood Drive. The fire spread rapidly and was fed by light to medium vegetation.

All southbound lanes were shut down as of 11:20 a.m. because of poor visibility due to smoke. Shortly after, the northbound lanes were also closed.

Advisory evacuations — warning residents that it was possible that the flames could come close to their homes — were in place for Mathews Ranch and structures to the north of the blaze, San Bernardino National Forest officials said on Twitter.

Some motorists tried getting around the closures and found themselves stuck.

Residents in the area reported dozens of vehicles clogging local roads. Cars and trucks went up a dirt road off Lytle Creek Road and discovered there was no outlet. And some larger trucks were failing to negotiate hairpin turns.

“Unfortunately, the best thing to do in this situation is just to hold tight,” CHP Officer Brian Alvarez said. “If someone gets stuck in a remote area, it might be awhile before we can get to them. It causes a huge problem because we have only so many resources.”

Caltrans spokeswoman Terri Kasinga encouraged motorists in such situations to stay off residential roads with which they are unfamiliar. And if sitting in traffic is too difficult, Kasinga suggested going to dinner or watching a movie to allow time for traffic to decrease.

Wednesday afternoon, while most of the smoke had cleared, Southern California Edison crews still had to assess damage to poles holding up electrical lines that spanned the northbound and southbound lanes before the freeway could reopen.

“As soon as Edison gives us the green light, we will open up the freeway,” California Highway Patrol Officer Brian Alvarez said about 2:30 p.m.

That happened minutes later.

The northbound lanes reopened about 2:40 p.m. Three of the five southbound lanes reopened 10 minutes later. The right two lanes continued to be closed into the evening.

The advisory evacuations were lifted around 5 p.m. Cajon Boulevard reopened at 5:15 p.m.

Some 250 fire personnel from multiple agencies were working to extinguish the flames. Aircraft dropped water and fire retardant in the fire area.

Traffic updates are available on Twitter at @caltrans8 and the Caltrans Quickmap at quickmap.dot.ca.gov

<https://www.sbsun.com/2018/09/26/fire-in-cajon-pass-shuts-southbound-15-freeway/>

Brush fire closes I-15 in Southern California

The Associated Press

Posted Wednesday, September 26th, 2018



The Keenbrook Fire is seen burning in San Bernardino County, California, on Wednesday, Sept. 26, 2018. (Photo: San Bernardino National Forest)

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. (AP) — A brush fire has forced a complete closure of Interstate 15 in Cajon Pass east of Los Angeles.

Caltrans says all lanes were closed around noon Wednesday and motorists should avoid the area.

The **San Bernardino County Fire Department** says the fire has grown to 20 acres (8 hectares).

I-15 is a major connector between Southern California, high desert cities and Las Vegas.

<https://news3lv.com/news/nation-world/brush-fire-closes-i-15-in-southern-california>

15 Freeway Reopens After 50-Acre Brush Fire in Cajon Pass Prompts Closure

BY CINDY VON QUEDNOW, MARK KONO AND KRISTINA BRAVO, KTLA

POSTED 12:13 PM, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018, UPDATED AT 09:28PM, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

The 15 Freeway reopened Wednesday afternoon after a 50-acre brush fire in the Cajon Pass forced officials to block it.

The fire erupted around 11 a.m. near Kenwood Avenue and and Cajon Boulevard, according to the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**. It was 50 percent contained as of 8:15 p.m., according to the federal information website InciWeb. An evacuation advisory for Mathews Ranch and structures north of the blaze was also lifted.

Smoke from the blaze affected the highway in the area. Aerial video from Sky5 showed traffic was backed up for miles as the smoke dissipated.

Smoke may continue to be visible later Wednesday as occasional flare ups occur, fire officials said.

At 2:41 p.m., Caltrans said the 15 Freeway has been reopened in both directions, but later clarified that the two right southbound lanes remained closed. The 215 was also cleared.

Old Cajon Boulevard between Cleghorn Road and Kenwood Avenue remained shut down as firefighters continued work in the area.

Some 250 personnel were assigned to the incident, InciWeb said.

<https://ktla.com/2018/09/26/20-acre-brush-fire-in-cajon-pass-prompts-closure-of-15-freeway/>

Evacuation advisory lifted after Cajon Pass brush fire shuts down 15 Freeway for hours

Staff Writer, ABC7

Thursday, September 27, 2018 12:45AM

CAJON PASS (KABC) -- A brush fire broke out along the Cajon Pass Wednesday and prompted a temporary evacuation advisory and closure of the 15 Freeway.

The blaze, dubbed the Keenbrook Fire, was first reported around 11 a.m. near Cajon Boulevard. Around 250 fire personnel from the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** and the San Bernardino National Forest Service battled the blaze.

The blaze charred approximately 50 acres, fire officials said. An advisory evacuation was issued for the Mathews Ranch area as well as for structures north of the fire, San Bernardino National Forest Service officials said.

Initially, just the southbound 15 Freeway was shut down near Highway 138. The northbound 15 Freeway was shut down a short time later, as was the northbound 215 Freeway at Palm/Kendall, according to Caltrans.

Both directions of the 15 Freeway were reopened with some restrictions on the southbound side, Caltrans tweeted around 2:40 p.m., adding that the northbound 215 Freeway was also reopened.

Cajon Boulevard was also later reopened.

At about 5 p.m., the San Bernardino County Fire Department said all advisory evacuations were lifted. Containment was at 50 percent, with some small flare ups still happening during the mop-up.

The cause of the blaze was not known.

<https://abc7.com/cajon-pass-brush-fire-shuts-down-15-fwy-for-hours/4344914/>

CAJON PASS FIRE: BLAZE CLOSES SOUTHBOUND I-15 FREEWAY IN CALIFORNIA

JENNI FINK, Newsweek
POSTED ON 9/26/18 AT 3:13 PM

A brush fire along the Cajon Pass in California prompted the closure of the southbound I-15 freeway on Wednesday.

As of 11:28 a.m. PDT, the brush fire, which has been referred to as both the Kenbrook Fire and Keenbrook Fire, had grown to 20 acres and was experiencing a moderate rate of spread, according to the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**. The fire caused the California Highway Patrol to close the southbound direction of I-15 at Highway 138 because smoke had begun to impact the freeway.

In a message on Twitter, Victor Valley Transit announced that one of its buses from Santa Barbara, California, to San Bernardino, California, was standing down because of the “rapidly spreading” fire causing the highway to close.

Along with the San Bernardino County Fire Department, the San Bernardino National Forest also responded to fight the blaze.

The cause of the fire was not immediately clear.

This is a developing story and will be updated as more information becomes available.

<https://www.newsweek.com/cajon-pass-fire-blaze-closes-southbound-i-15-freeway-california-1140092>

Cajon Pass brush fire prompts partial I-15 closure

Mark Saunders, 10News

Posted 2:21 PM, Sep 26, 2018, Updated 4:51 PM, Sep 26, 2018

(KGTV) – Interstate 15 through the Cajon Pass was shut down Wednesday due to a brush fire burning nearby.

The fire, dubbed the Keenbrook Fire, began around 11 a.m. near Kenwood Avenue and Cajon Boulevard, according to the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**. The fire had grown to 50 acres with a rapid rate of spread and 30 percent containment as of 5 p.m.

Southbound I-15 had been closed at Oak Hills, while northbound I-15 traffic was being diverted to southbound I-215. Northbound I-215 traffic was also being diverted to southbound I-15.

As of 3 p.m., I-15 had been opened in both directions, with lane restrictions on the southbound side.

Cal Fire San Bernardino and San Bernardino National Forest crews were all working. About 250 fire personnel were fighting the blaze.

<https://www.10news.com/news/cajon-pass-brush-fire-prompts-partial-i-15-closure>

Firefighters and bystanders lift off-road vehicle to free man in Hesperia

VVNG Staff

Posted September 26, 2018



A man was pinned under an off-road vehicle in Hesperia. (Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News)

HESPERIA, Calif. (VVNG.com) — Firefighters and bystanders rushed to help a man who was pinned under an off-road vehicle in Hesperia around 6:27 p.m. Wednesday along Lookout Trail and Meadowlark Avenue.

Three firefighters and three civilians helped lift the vehicle off the victim so the man could be rushed to a hospital.

A helicopter landed at the scene, but after the man's condition was re-assessed, his injuries did not require him to be airlifted, according to **San Bernardino County Fire** Captain Bill Mahan.

At last word, the victim was in stable condition and was transported by ground ambulance to a hospital.

Officials say preliminary investigation suggests the man and a child were in the off-road vehicle when it overturned, but the 1-year-old child was uninjured.

No further information was immediately available.

<https://www.vvng.com/firefighters-and-bystanders-lift-off-road-vehicle-to-free-man-in-hesperia/>

Lucerne Valley/Johnson Valley MAC Board opposes fire tax

Martin Estacio, Victorville Daily Press

Posted September 26, 2018

Illegal dumping and San Bernardino County's proposed parcel tax were hot-button issues at Thursday evening's Lucerne Valley/Johnson Valley Municipal Advisory Council meeting.

The MAC Board took a position to formally oppose the parcel tax proposed by **San Bernardino County Fire**. The so-called FP-5 tax would apply to every property owner in Lucerne and Johnson Valleys, as well as all other unincorporated portions of the county.

Illegal dumping

Several attendees posited that because the local solid waste site, the Camp Rock Transfer Station, is limited in what it can take, this contributes to the amount of garbage strewn throughout the desert.

"Everyone remember that what is not accepted at the transfer station ends up in the desert," said MAC Chairman Roger Peterson.

People with "questionable loads" that are turned away don't go back home with their trash, he said.

Mark Lundquist, field representative for Third District Supervisor James Ramos, also addressed "not very scrupulous" contractors who pocket clients' disposal fees and end up leaving construction material where they're not supposed to.

Superintendent Brud Hancock with County Solid Waste Management acknowledged that the transfer station is a land-use-only site, meaning it can only accept ordinary household waste, tires, metals, recyclables, and appliances. He sees the problem as more than about just what the site can accept, however.

"The issue is a mindset," he said.

A resident of Yucca Valley, Hancock related how even though the Landers landfill accepts more than Lucerne Valley's site, he still sees bags of trash dumped in close proximity.

Hancock said he believes the solution is in educating people about alternatives and utilizing code enforcement more efficiently, noting that even if the sites were able to accept everything, they'd have to remain open 24/7, which isn't feasible.

One of these alternatives is the ABOP site located behind Fire Station 8. It is allowed to accept certain household hazardous waste, including antifreeze, batteries, motor oil/filters, latex paint, and electronic waste.

Run by volunteers, it is typically open the third Saturday of every month. Once a year, however, it accepts all household hazardous waste, according to Supervising Hazardous Materials Specialist Monica Ronchetti.

There are also 14 permanent hazardous waste sites located throughout the county, with the closest being in Apple Valley, she said.

Parcel tax

The tax would levy \$157.26 annually on every unincorporated parcel, vacant or not, and would include a 3 percent maximum annual inflationary factor. Proceeds would be used to maintain existing services, according to County Fire officials.

Chief Mark Hartwig spoke at the Aug. 17 MAC meeting, listing as some of the reasons for the proposed FP-5 expansion a \$29.3 million deficit eating up reserve funds and the lack of paid-call firefighters to help cut costs.

MAC board member Harriet “Marie” Brashear said the chief didn’t explain how the specific number for the tax was calculated, however.

A protest process is in place for the proposal with notices that were mailed to all property owners Sept. 14. If at least 25 percent of owners protest, the tax will be placed on the ballot for voters to decide. If protests number greater than 50 percent, the proposal will be withdrawn outright.

Attendees at the meeting were worried about the absentee owners who might never receive the notice or disinterested owners who might see it as just routine correspondence from the county.

Also something troubling brought up was the fact that some who don’t have computer access might not be able to print out and mail a form before the protest period ends with the public hearing on Oct. 16.

The notice warns that the fire “district is not responsible for any delays caused by the Postal Service for any protest submitted by regular mail” and the letter cannot be postmarked.

For clarification, the notice sent out lists a return address with “Service Zone FP-5 Expansion” listed on the top, sent to the owner of record with the assessor’s parcel number.

To obtain a protest form, you can either visit www.sbcfire.org or contact “211.”

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20180926/lucerne-valleyjohnson-valley-mac-board-opposes-fire-tax>

Opinions

Victorville Daily Press

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20180926/your-letters-9-26-2018>

- **Fire tax**

(San Bernardino County's) new \$157 per parcel fire tax is dirty and sneaky. The deadline needs to be extended.

On the three letters I retrieved for my first parcel, one side in English and the other side in Espanol, I just got wind of the \$157 per year fire tax fee. The paper they sent me said to call 211 yet 211 never heard of any form available. That alone should garner another six-month extension.

On my one parcel the taxes are \$200, so this will almost double them. I can't afford this 75 percent increase in property taxes. People need to wake up. It is not only the \$157 per year per parcel but the 3 percent yearly increase for life. - **E.T. Snell, Newberry Springs**

Hi-Desert Star

- Why we should protest fire department plans for new fee
By Ed Vallerand Twentynine Palms
Posted: Wednesday, September 26, 2018 5:32 pm

The (**San Bernardino County Fire Department's** proposed fire assessment) increase is to cover a \$27.6 million shortfall, not to provide any extra services. SBC Fire wants some of the poorest people in the county to subsidize San Bernardino City area fire protection. Wonder Valley's \$132 increase equates to 661 Top Ramen noodle meals per year and \$157.26 equals 779 meals per year.

A \$42-43 million reserve existed in 2014. How did it become a \$29 million shortage?

Fire personnel are overpaid. On publicpay.ca.gov, in 2017, a search of San Bernardino County's 100 highest paid workers, where the lowest paid is \$198,106, shows many medical/legal personnel, 25 firemen and only 12 sheriff personnel on the list (the sheriff is paid just 10 percent more than a fire captain, plus the under-sheriff is paid only about \$4,000 more than a fire captain). Why are we paying \$198-253K to fire personnel who are required by federal labor laws to sleep for at least six hours per 24 hour shift? \$50,000 for sleeping. WOW!

Blotted pay raise: The 2014-16 firefighter Memorandum of Understanding (contract) was superseded in 2015 with a new 2015-2019 MOU. In it, the basic firefighters saw a one-year 2.5 percent to 3.5 percent COLA raise plus their annual step increase, resulting in a 5 percent to 8.4 percent increase. The captains saw one-year COLA increases of 9.2 percent to 12.3 percent plus their annual increases, resulting in a 12 percent to 14.9 percent increase. The engineers were the biggest gainers, seeing a one-year 10.9 percent to 14.7 percent COLA raise plus annual increase.

CalPERS liabilities/future retirement pay went way up in excess of 12 percent due to these 2015 raises!

Country contracts with cities? Normal sustaining contracts specify a level of effort (number of man

months/man years of effort) with an annual inflation factor applied for future years. FP-5 has a 3 percent inflation factor in it but what factors do the city contracts have? Does giving personnel 14 percent increases result in the county/us eating about a 12 percent cost increase?

Yucca Valley: Will inferred promises be kept? Twentynine Palms was told the county planned to build a \$5 million station around Adobe and Amboy. Never happened! The city purchased a “hotel” ladder truck (for the water-board-managed fire department) that has been gone for at least six months to Apple Valley/Victorville. How much of the 22 percent of Yucca Valley property taxes that go to the fire department and \$157.62 from the new assessment will stay here?

Morongo Basin Ambulance responds faster to calls than SBC Fire in many areas. June’s MBA report to the Twentynine Palms City Council showed that MBA was on scene before SBC Fire 58 percent of the time, concurrently 27 percent and after SBC Fire only 15 percent of time. MBA also supplies a monthly report to the Municipal Advisory Council.

You can get fire insurance through the state exchange even without a local fire station. A state insurance representative briefed Wonder Valley. If someone cannot get insurance than they can contact the state. An insurance company will be assigned to cover them. WV is already in the most expensive category because it doesn’t have water service, so probably no cost impact.

If the protest fails, will the union get big raises in its new 2019 contract and propose another increase in base and annual growth rate? Protest now!

EDITOR’S NOTE — This soapbox was edited to fit in the 600-word limit and to expand some concepts that were abbreviated.

http://www.hidesertstar.com/opinion/letters_to_editor/article_d9403e00-c1ec-11e8-95f5-57425c40f2b9.html

- Encourage property owners to vote ‘no’
Dorothy Calvert Yucca Valley
Posted: Wednesday, September 26, 2018 5:31 pm

Since my daughters are paying property taxes in this county of San Bernardino, I’d like to encourage local residents to vote “no” (on the Fire Protection 5 expansion) or to call the nice people at **San Bernardino County Fire Department** at (760) 228-6380 and they will tell you the procedure for downloading a form for your opinion or will mail you one.

When one is on a fixed and very limited income, that is not an option many of us have in the Morongo Basin. Or is hiking up our taxes a way for the county to force us out of our homes? Because I may end up in one of the cardboard boxes off the side of Twentynine Palms Highway.

http://www.hidesertstar.com/opinion/letters_to_editor/article_b79025cc-c1ec-11e8-8491-5b035c15a975.html

- Proposed fire tax is a total sham!
Steve and Sandy Ball Yucca Mesa
Posted: Wednesday, September 26, 2018 5:28 pm

I am asking all residents of San Bernardino County to say “no” on your (Fire Protection zone FP-5) protest form that all homeowners should have received in the mail as a public notice. **SBC Fire** Chief Mark Hartwig promised (the protest forms) would be mailed out to all homeowners in the county. The problem is the protest form that you need to send back if you disagree with the tax was not mailed with the public notice.

Now keep in mind, they pay a bulk postage fee, so why did they leave out the protest form?

Chief Hartwig was not truthful and did not tell all the county residents at all of these meetings throughout the county that the protest form would not be included in the packet. Can you really trust what he said about the proposed expansion of Fire Protection Zone 5?

This fire tax is a sham and you should call Supervisor James Ramos at (909) 387-4855 or email to supervisorramos@sbcounty.gov to express your concern. If you have Internet service, as a lot of our rural residents may not have. And many of these residents are older and if they have Internet may not know how to use it. Real convenient for getting this past.

You need to voice your protest vote, and send Chief Hartwig back to the drawing board.

http://www.hidesertstar.com/opinion/letters_to_editor/article_68d7e4f6-c1ec-11e8-9795-3bab363b89e8.html